

This article was written for Maledicta, the international journal of verbal aggression, and was published in Volume 11. I had some reservations about publishing it on the net. These lines were collected on the understanding that they would be published in a work of scholarship, and not distributed wholesale to performers for use in their acts. I therefore include the following.

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Please do not take lines from this article and use them regularly in performance. However, I doubt if writers of the lines I have collected would mind if they were used once or twice a year to deal with particularly difficult hecklers, so I have no objection to that.

YOU'RE UGLY, YOUR DICK IS SMALL AND EVERYBODY FUCKS YOUR MOTHER  
THE STAND UP COMEDIAN'S RESPONSE TO THE HECKLER

Andrew Conway

In performances by comedians in the USA it is not uncommon for a member of the audience to interrupt the performance by shouting a comment. The comedian must respond to this or lose face. This article discusses some of the responses that are currently in use[1], and defines the main categories of insult that are used. The comedian's response to the heckler is called a 'heckler line'. Usually the performer simply wants to silence the offender so that he[2] can continue with his act. The ideal heckler line leaves the victim feeling so crushed that he is not inclined to continue the dialog. If the comedian can, he will respond to whatever the heckler said, but he need not. A successful comedian will usually have a large repertoire of lines, and will attempt to choose one that fits the situation, as this will make the response appear to be improvised. A few performers will encourage hecklers, as responses that appear to be spontaneous will be funnier to the audience than a prepared routine. One commented that his job was to make whatever the heckler said seem funny, to make the heckler comfortable with what he had said.

It is normally considered very bad etiquette for a comedian to use a joke written by another comedian without paying for it or 'trading' another joke for it. If the author finds out about it, it can lead to more than merely verbal aggression. Many comedians make an exception for heckler lines, provided they are not used regularly or made part of a routine. The logic seems to be that if

you really need to control a difficult member of the audience, you should be free to use whatever it takes. However, the authors of some of the lines below might not be happy to hear them used by another performer. Sometimes a comedian will take an existing joke and modify it to avoid stealing material, or to create a line that works better for his stage character or audience. This is referred to as a 'switch', and it is considered acceptable behavior, provided the change is large enough. Many of the jokes below are switches on some other line.

The main categories of heckler line are variations on

- \* Telling the heckler to be quiet
- \* Calling the heckler asshole
- \* Implying the heckler is drunk or drugged
- \* Implying the heckler is childish
- \* Implying the heckler is an idiot
- \* Implying the heckler is ugly
- \* Sexual insults
- \* Insults to parents
- \* Implying the heckler has a menial job

Each of these categories is briefly commented on below, and examples are given. Lines such as the title of this article which fall into more than one category have been assigned to one or the other by auctorial whim. Some lines are specifically directed at men, women, children, adolescents or people with beards. Where this is the case, it is indicated before the line. If a line which applies to a specific sex could be easily modified to apply to the other sex I have not bothered to give both versions, or to indicate to which sex it applies. Obscure references are noted after the line.

Telling the heckler to be quiet

A simple and popular approach is for the comedian to tell the heckler to be quiet.

'Shut up.'

'Shut the fuck up.'

'Fuck off.'

'On a scale of one to ten- fuck off.'

'Look man, I grew up in the ghetto, I've been through your wallet, I know where you live, shut up, sit down.' The comedian is black.

'Shut yer fucking face! Unless you have something intelligent to say.'

'I'm not really good with hecklers, but a friend who is good with hecklers wrote something down for me. Oh, yeah, "Fuck off!"' The comedian takes a piece of paper from his pocket and pretends to read from it before saying "Oh, yeah".

To a child: 'Why don't you take a piggy back ride on a

buzz saw?'

'Sir, if I said anything to offend you, please believe me.'

'You know, I think you've got nothing there.'

'I'll buy you a beer if you'll drink it in Oakland.' The comedian is in San Francisco. Oakland is a largely black town on the other side of the Bay, which is the butt of many local jokes.

'Hey, man, I like doing my act the way you like having sex- alone.'

'Why don't you put your nose in your ear and blow your brains out?'

To an aggressive group of hecklers who were walking away from the show: 'Oh, yeah?' This was said quietly, so that the audience could hear it, but the hecklers could not.

'Do you know who I am?- Not many people do. That's why I carry this.' The comedian then makes a one finger gesture considered crude in America. This is a parody of a series of American Express commercials in which this phrase precedes the display of a credit card.

To a heckler who has just said something which is not funny: 'Well, I don't know about you, but my sides are splitting. Aren't you glad you got out of bed to say that?' Said sarcastically.

### Calling the heckler asshole

The word asshole seems to have a particular resonance in heckler lines. The heckler is behaving in a manner which is aggressive and unpleasant to the comedian, and by extension to the rest of the audience. This would normally justify the epithet. The insult has the right emotive content - it is strong enough to be funny, but not so powerful that the comedian loses the sympathy of the audience.

'If I wanted to hear from an asshole I would have farted.'

'If you want to be on stage we'll switch places - you come up here and be funny, I'll go down there and act like an asshole.'

'The difference between a comic and an asshole- is about ten feet.'

'What an asshole.' This line works best if the comedian is polite to the heckler first.

'I'm sorry, I don't know how to deal with you, I'm a comic not a proctologist.'

'Is that a heckler?' 'No, it's an asshole.' This is performed by two comedians, one of whom says the first line and the other the second.

To a pair of hecklers: 'Stereo assholes.'  
'Seventeen more of you and we'd have a golf course.' A  
golf course has eighteen holes.  
'On a scale of one to ten- you're an asshole.'  
'Excuse me, what was that?- I like that, assholes with  
amnesia.' The second part of this line is only used  
if the heckler fails to repeat what he just said.  
'Any more bright ideas, asshole?'

Implying the heckler is drunk or drugged

Very often a heckler may be under the influence of alcohol or  
other intoxicants. Even if he are not, it is common for the  
comedian to suggest that he is (or should be).

'It's alright, I remember the first time I had a beer.'  
'It's alright, I remember the first time I had a  
quaalude.'

'Don't smoke marijuana, this could happen to you.'

To a child: 'Go ask mummy for a valium.'

To a child: 'Go ask mummy for a thorazine.'

To a child: 'Had a little too much sugar this morning?'

'Children, just say "No"- Children, look at this man-  
just say "No"!' This is a reference to an anti-drug  
slogan.

'Here's an alcoholic who doesn't want to remain  
anonymous.'

'You shouldn't drink on an empty head.'

'Looks like the face on the bar room floor finally got  
up.'

'He's suffering from bottle fatigue.'

'One more word out of you and I'll put you back in your  
bottle of alcohol.' This implies that the heckler is a  
biological specimen.

'Isn't it amazing what a little kindness, patience and  
benzedrine can do?'

'I'm sorry, I don't speak alcoholic.'

Implying the heckler is childish

A comedian will can suggest that heckling is childish behavior.  
Any further interruptions then become an admission of immaturity  
on the part of the heckler. The comedian will often adopt a  
patronizing or superior tone for this type of line. Similar lines,  
but usually with a more gentle insult, are used if the heckler  
really is a child.

'Isn't that special?'

'Thank you for sharing.'

'I hope your face clears up.'

To a child: 'What's the matter, kid, didn't you get

enough attention at home?'

'You go home and tell this joke to your mum, because you still live with her.'

'Everyone else here works and plays well with others.'

'Don't yell at me, I ain't your mother.'

To a child: 'Now I know why some animals eat their young.'

To a child: 'You make me wish I'd donated to Planned Parenthood.'

To a child: 'I love kids- lightly sauteed.'

To a child: 'I love children, I eat one every day.'

To a child: 'I have the heart of a child - in a jar at home.' As with all spoken comedy, timing of heckler lines is important. One comedian who reviewed an earlier version of this article was particularly concerned with the rhythm or meter with which the line is delivered. This is one of several lines he modified. The previous version was 'I have the heart of a small child - in a jar in the kitchen.'

To a child: 'If you guys want to grow up you'll stop now, cause I'm bigger than you are and I carry hatchets, so deal with that.' The comedian is a juggler, who juggles hatchets in his act.

To a child: 'What are you going to be IF you grow up?'

To a child: 'This year's poster child for zero population growth.'

To a child who has just been funny: 'That was a pretty good joke, kid. What are you trying to do, top your parents?'

'You could get a job in a charm school- as a bad example.'

Implying the heckler is an idiot

The comedian can insult the heckler's intelligence by suggesting a severe mental handicap, a taste for soap operas or just living in an unfashionable town.

'I'm paid to act like a fool, what's your excuse?'

'What holds your ears apart?'

'I see your therapy's coming along just fine'

'So what's the matter? "Thirtysomething" was on reruns?'

The author believes that "Thirtysomething" is a television program.

'What, was there no tractor pull on tonight, you had nothing to do?' A "tractor pull" is a form of televised "entertainment" too stupid to explain.

'Did you go to school on the big school bus or the little school bus?' "The little school bus" would be used for handicapped children.

'We'll have a telethon for you later.' "Telethons" are long television programs which attempt to raise charitable contributions usually for the diseased or handicapped.

'Were you in the special class at school?' "The special class" would be for mentally handicapped children.

'Are you from the shallow end of the gene pool?'

'Do all your friends wear hockey helmets and go on a lot of field trips?' Implies the heckler was in a class of mentally handicapped children.

'Every village has one.'

'There's a guy who'll never get cancer of the brain.'

'He's a legend in his own mind.'

To a heckler who has just got a laugh: 'That's pretty good, got another one? No? That's why I'm up here and you're down there.'

'Isn't it amazing that such a big head can hold such a small mind?'

'Hey, mind your own business- or don't you own a business- or a mind?' The comedian I collected this line from was particularly concerned that I get the timing correct. As he put it, "It's 'Hey, mind your own business,' one, two, three, 'or don't you own a business?' one, two, three, 'or a mind?'"

'Well, there's something penicillin won't cure.'

'Your parents must be cousins.'

'Isn't it a shame when cousins marry?'

To a heckler who has said something inaudible:

'Aaaughhh!' Said as if imitating the heckler.

'Where are you from?- That explains it.'

'Where are you from?- Sorry?- No, I heard you, I'm just sorry.'

Implying the heckler is ugly

As usual, the content of the insult need have nothing to do with reality. It does not matter how good looking the heckler is, calling him ugly can still get a laugh.

'Is that really your face or did your neck just throw up?'

'Is that your face or did you just block a kick?'

'You're the only case where the baby died and the afterbirth lived.'

'On a scale of one to ten- you're ugly.'

To a man: 'You're ugly, your dick is short, no one likes you, shut the fuck up.'

To a man: 'You look like Beaver Cleaver, is your mum going to make us a swell pot roast today?' "Beaver Cleaver" was a child character in an early situation

comedy, "Leave it to Beaver".

'I've seen better faces on a clock, and even then a cuckoo came out.'

To an adolescent girl: 'Ah, the flower of womanhood! You look more like the stem.'

'I've seen better faces on an iodine bottle.' An iodine bottle is labelled with a skull and cross bones to indicate poison.

'Is that a wart on your tongue, or did you bring your wife?'

To an older woman: 'Give me a break will you. After all, you'd still have the funniest lines in the place if you kept your mouth shut.'

To a woman: 'How many peeping Toms have you cured?'

To a bearded man: 'Get a shave. Your face looks like an armpit.'

'You could play a human being with a little rehearsing.'

'You've got just the right kind of looks for television. Two more legs and you could star in a western.'

To one or more men in suits: 'Oh, look, a C&R commercial just got let out.' "C&R" make cheap suits.

To someone with an obviously expensive haircut: 'Hey, you, Mr. Supercuts.' "Supercuts" are cheap barbers.

Usually to a woman: 'Did you hear Jenny Craig is having a special?' "Jenny Craig" is a weight loss program.

## Sexual insults

A great range of sexual insults and slurs can be used. The classification of these would be enough for another article. Among other things the heckler can be accused of being impotent, gay, promiscuous, a masturbator, a prostitute, the relative of a prostitute, a transvestite, or of dating someone promiscuous.

Usually to a woman: 'You'd look good with a dick in your mouth. Just kidding, you'd look good with everyone's dick in your mouth.'

To a man: 'I don't have a lot of time for this so let's get it over quickly - you're ugly, your dick is small and everybody fucks your mother.'

To a man: 'Good to see you again, back in men's clothing.'

To a man: 'Look, it's my old school master. How are you doing Master Bater?' This can really get a laugh on stage, though it looks painful in writing.

To someone who has just said "That's easy": 'So's your sister.'

'Is that your boyfriend? - Small world.'

'Is that your wife? - Small world.'

To a man who has just implied the comedian is gay: 'Only

one way to find out if I'm gay - suck my dick and see if I come.'

To a man who has just implied the comedian is gay: 'Only one way to find out if I'm gay - suck my dick and see if I try to stop you.'

To a man who has just implied the comedian is gay: 'You want to know if I'm gay - you and your girlfriend bend over and see who I fuck.'

'Eat me.'

To a man: 'Save your breath, you'll need it to blow up your date later- I don't know what happened, I bit her ear, she farted and flew out the window.' This implies that the heckler uses an inflatable plastic doll for sexual purposes.

To a man or boy: 'You're just bitter 'cause your parents wanted a boy.'

To a man: 'Let's go somewhere and drink lattÄs and talk about it.' This is said as if the comedian is flirting with the heckler. It is particularly effective with Mormons who do not drink coffee.

To a man: 'Do you like espresso?' Said as if the comedian is flirting with the heckler.

To a man: 'You couldn't get laid in a whorehouse with a fistful of twenties.'

To a man who has just said "Fuck you!": 'Fuck me, you'll never go back to women.'

To a man the comedian has just insulted: 'Sorry, that's a low blow- Speaking of low blows, how's your wife?'

To a heckler who has failed to respond to an insult:

'What's the matter? Got your tongue caught in a zipper?'

To two men: 'Where are you from?- You guys come together?- Oh really?' "Oh really" is said in a tone of voice that implies the men are gay.

To a man who has just implied the comedian is gay: 'Why, are you lonely?'

To a woman: 'Did you folks hear about the good time that was had by all? Well, here she is.'

To a woman standing at the edge of the stage: 'While you're down there do an old friend a favour.'

To the boyfriend of a woman heckler: 'Slap the bitch!'

This would normally be too strong an insult to use on stage, but the comedian has a particularly aggressive stage character and built up to this with milder insults to which the heckler responded.

Insults to parents

As many articles in Maledicta have indicated, it is not uncommon



for an insult to be applied to the family members of the target. Heckler lines are no exception. Parents are the usual subject, particularly the heckler's mother.

'I went to Baskin Robbins and the flavor of the month was your mother. I has two scoops'. "Baskin Robbins" is a chain of ice cream parlours. To a heckler who has just said "That's easy": 'So's your mother.'

'Were your parents related? At least they had the same last name.'

'I could have been your father but my brother beat me to it cause he had change for a dollar.'

'Yo mama.' The comedian is black, or performing to a black audience. This implies he is about to insult the heckler's mother.

'People like you make me wish birth control was retroactive.'

'I'm glad you came. Too bad your father did.'

To a child: 'Shut up or I'll put my hand in my pocket and strangle your father.'

Implying the heckler has a menial job

A comedian will often state that the heckler is preventing him from doing his job, and add that he does not interfere with the heckler at work. However, the job that the comedian claims not to be interfering with is always of a menial nature, usually prostitution or working in a fast food restaurant.

'This is my job. I don't come into McDonalds' and give you a hard time when you're at work.'

'This is my job. I don't knock the shovel out of your hand when you're at work.'

Usually to a woman: 'This is my job. I don't knock the dick out of your mouth when you're at work.'

To a woman: 'This is my job. I don't come and put out your red light when you're at work.'

'This is my job. I don't show up at your job and unplug the Slurpee machine.' The "Slurpee machine" serves an almost edible product in certain fast food restaurants.

To a woman: 'This is my job. I don't show up at your job and jump on the bed.'

'This is my impression of you at work: "Do you want fries with that?"'

'Look chick, you made your expenses for the night, let me make mine.' This implies that the woman is a prostitute. The line is an old one, and the term "chick" might no longer be acceptable.

To a platinum blonde woman: 'Isn't platinum a precious

metal? Or is it a common ore?' This is a pun on ore/whore.

To a woman: 'You work your side of the street and I'll work mine.' Said by a street juggler.

'This is my job. I don't peer in the alley when you're giving blow jobs to transsexuals.'

To a man: 'This is my job. I don't show up at your job at the sperm clinic and jerk the Playboy out of your hands.'

Finally, there are limits to the force of insult that a comedian can use and still remain funny. While a male comedian can call a female heckler asshole, he is unlikely to get a good response if he calls her bitch or cunt. The limits of acceptable bad taste depend on the audience and the setting, as well as the stage character that the comedian has established. A black comedian entertaining a rural white audience cannot say 'Shut up or I'm going to date your sister and make her pregnant', nor can a clown character performing at a children's birthday party say 'Shut the fuck up!' however much he may want to.

[1]The majority of these lines were collected from Robert Nelson, Scott Meltzer, Ngaio Bealum and Dave Gomez.

Many thanks for their creative maledictions.

[2]I use the masculine pronoun with apologies to include female comedians and hecklers.